

ROANOKE CANAL TRAIL  
Roanoke Rapids to Weldon along Roanoke River  
Roanoke Rapids  
Halifax County  
North Carolina

HALS NC-6  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### ROANOKE CANAL TRAIL

HALS NO. NC - 6

- Location:** Roanoke Rapids to Weldon, Halifax County, North Carolina  
Lat: 36.4745 Long: -77.6463 (Trail point southeast of Roanoke Avenue in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84).
- Significance:** The Roanoke Canal contains some of the most important and best preserved early 19th century canal construction in the nation. The 7.2 mile Roanoke Canal Trail and its contributing resources tell the story of the history of transportation and a developing way of life along the Roanoke River from the early 1800s to today.
- History:** Begun before 1819 and completed in 1823, the Roanoke Canal was built as the North Carolina segment of the ambitious Roanoke Navigation System. It was designed to connect the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and Norfolk along the Roanoke River over a distance of 400 miles.

The Roanoke Canal followed the Roanoke River. A fall line from the Piedmont Region to the Coastal Plain occurs between Roanoke Rapids and Weldon, where the river drops 100 feet in a few miles, creating a series of rapids. This major obstacle was overcome by the construction of a nine-mile bateau canal with locks. The excavation of the canal bed was extremely difficult due to large amounts of rock. The locks, and an aqueduct spanning Chockoyotte Creek, were constructed of native granite.

In 1885, the canal was deepened and widened for use as a source of water power. When completed, the canal provided an economic boost for the area and the farmers of interior North Carolina. Goods and products were carried on the canal. This, in large part, influenced the development of Halifax County as a significant seat of state government.

The restored canal trail is currently used by hikers and cyclists. Two recently constructed wooden overlooks offer views of the aqueduct bridge and the concrete bulkhead structure. A brick generator house built on the upper locks in the early 1900s is on the National Register of Historic Places and currently serves as a history of transportation museum.

- Sources:** "The Roanoke Canal: A History of the Old Navigation and Water Power Canal of Halifax County, North Carolina", Peggy Jo Cobb Braswell, 1987.

The Roanoke Canal Museum and Trail

15 Jackson Street Extension  
Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870  
Phone: 252-537-2769  
[canalmuseum@roanokerapidsnc.com](mailto:canalmuseum@roanokerapidsnc.com)

Chris Wicker, City of Roanoke Rapids Parks & Recreation  
PO Box 38  
Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870  
252-533-2882  
[cwicker@roanokerapidsnc.com](mailto:cwicker@roanokerapidsnc.com)

Historian: David Swanson, RLA, January, 24, 2009  
[david@swansonlandscapearchitecture.com](mailto:david@swansonlandscapearchitecture.com)



Chockoyotte Creek Aqueduct (David Swanson, 2002).



Remnants of bulkhead structure as part of the old power canal (David Swanson, 2001).